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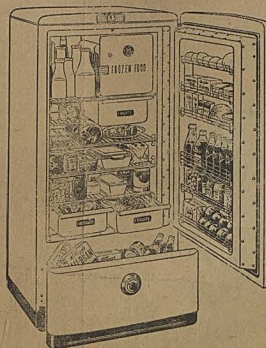


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His Dream Came True !!

...This is, in a sense a sad story. But it is also the type of story that will make you feel proud and perhaps inspire you to try to capture some of the spirit of young Tommy. As far as we know, the narrative is fictional. But having known many boys, we realize it could happen to you.

By Fr. Jerome Duket, O.F.M. Conf.

"This is Father Evans". I didn't need to be told for I immediately recognized the voice on the telephone as that of the pastor of a neighboring parish. After an exchange of greetings, he went on:

"Father, I've a funeral tomorrow at nine and I would like

you to say a few words." It was the custom of that church, so I was not surprised at I request.

"Why, certainly," I replied. "Do I know the person who is being buried?"

"I don't think so. It's a little boy, about ten. He died quite suddenly and I thought a short talk would serve to console the parents."

"Was he enrolled in your school?"

"Yes, he was. And he was always on time, too. Was a daily communicant. He started about a year ago and has been as faithful as the sunrise."

"Did he serve Mass?"

"The most faithful altar boy I had," Father Evans replied

quickly.

"What did he die of?"

"Leukemia."

Briefly, that was the series of facts I had to go on. A few minutes later, I put aside the work that had been occupying my thoughts and set out to visit the boy's home.

He lived in a nice neighborhood. The house that I approached was a modern one, recently built. The small wreath on the doorstep indicated that I had arrived at the right place.

Perhaps it was the clerical collar that they noticed but at once the father and mother of the boy came to me. Without saying a word, they led me into the room where the simple coffin was enshrined in a regular forest of flowers.

There, lying in that little coffin were the last remains of a young boy. One look and I recognized him. I had first met him just three short weeks ago and my mind was as if it had just happened.

I knelt there in that little room with Tommy Neyland. I knelt there and as others came in and out, I led in the recitation of the Rosary. I must confess, now, though, that my mind was flashing the thoughts that I were going to give my little talk on the next day.

When I rose from my knees, the father and mother beckoned me. They led me into another room where we could be alone.

There were no tears in their eyes. I marvelled at this, at first, but when Mrs. Neyland opened her lips I knew why.

Her voice was soft. It did not even have a note of sadness in it as she whispered, "Thank God He took him."

I was dumb-founded. Here were a mother and father who had just lost their only child. He had been taken away from them and the mother was thanking God. It was a new experience.

The father of the little boy joined in. "Father," he said, "is a blessing that God saw fit to gather Tommy in, now. If he had been forced to face the stark reality of the world around him, he would have been so shocked by the wickedness of the world that his heart would have been broken."

Some of his meaning came to me for I remembered my first meeting with Tommy Neyland.

Mrs. Neyland gave me no chance to speak. "His life was wrapped up in God. We never could figure out just why the was so religious but he did have a wonderful devotion to the Blessed Mother."

"I know about that," I inserted quickly. "You see, Tommy and I got to know each other very quickly just about three weeks ago."

"So you're the priest who preached the sermon at the crowning of the Blessed Mother," exclaimed Mrs. Neyland. "Why that sermon was the subject of our conversation from the time you gave it until the time that Tommy died."

"Impossible," I exclaimed. "No one could have remembered that sermon."

Tommy did. Anything that was said about the Blessed Mother found a quick response in him. He lived for her."

The next day I arose early. I said Mass as usual at my church and then hurried over to St. Ignace for the funeral of Tommy Neyland.

Before I knew it, it was time for me to address the friends and the relatives of Tommy. They had all gathered there in the church. The entire student body of the school was there.

His classmates had acted as pall-bearers.

Without an introduction I began my remarks. "Not so long ago," I began, "I visited this

Continued on Page Four

Annual Bingo At Sacred Heart Church

The ladies of the Altar Society of Sacred Heart Church LaSalle are sponsoring their Annual Bingo to be held in the Church basement, on Fri., May 15th. All cash prizes and 25 door prizes.

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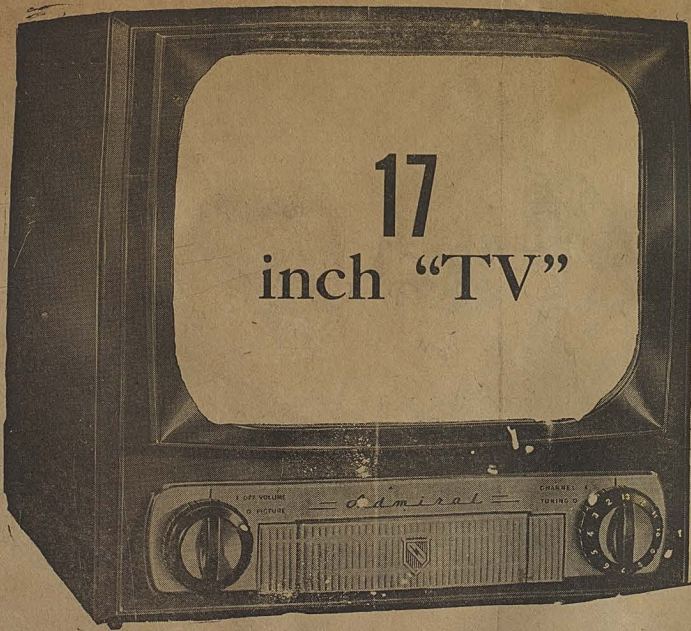
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His Dream Came True !!

church and preached at your land, it really does matter. You may I crowning. Just three weeks ago I stood here in this church and delivered a sermon on Mary the Mother of God. That time I spoke to a group of young girls who were about to be invested in the Sodality of Mary."

I paused and looked at all those young faces, then I continued. "Those who heard me that night were not just the girls in the front row. I had a special listener that night. It was some one whom I had met just a few minutes before the sermon. That listener was an altar boy."

A tenseness in the congregation told me they knew that I was talking of Tommy Neyland. "That night," I continued, "I was pacing up and down the sanctuary as it is my custom before going out to preach. Suddenly I was surprised when one of the altar boys asked me a question."

"Are you going to preach on the Blessed Virgin?" he asked. Really, his question startled me. "Yes," I replied as I tried to search the brown eyes that looked into mine. "Good," he exclaimed, "I always like to hear the priest preach on the Blessed Mother."

"The look that came into those brown eyes was a sincere look. It was genuine. Later, as I stood at the altar rail and delivered my sermon to that group of young girls I seemed to have eyes behind me. I knew instinctively that that little boy was drinking in every word of my sermon."

"What I said didn't matter, then, but now, as I stand here to speak to you of Tommy Ney-

land, it really does matter. You see, that altar boy was Tommy. "His life was short, — but it was a life devoted to Mary, his heavenly Mother. I have seen other children with a tender devotion to Mary — but this is the first boy who was not afraid to admit he was in love with Our Blessed Mother."

"He memorized every word of that sermon as it left my lips that night. Such a thing is unbelievable except where the mind is so wrapped up in what it believes that it is impossible to do anything."

"Tommy did it. Last night as I visited his parents and took one long, last look at the little boy whom you knew as Tommy Neyland, I discovered from them how much he did love."

"As I looked at the little form in the coffin last night the lips were closed forever. Yet they seemed formed as if ready to speak. It almost seemed as if he were yearning to break the secret of eternity to those in the room. Yet death had put her finger over his lips and had said No."

"I honestly believe that Tom-

my is with his heavenly mother. Such love could not be forgotten by the mother of Jesus. We, who remain here, Tommy's father and mother, you, his classmates, his friends, and all the others — all of us can learn a little lesson from Tommy."

"As he did, so can we all love that heavenly mother. He loved her so much that he could not wait to grow up to be with her. He was in love with the Mother of God. He lived for her and he died for her."

"We who go on will be faced with many trials. There will be times when things will all be dark and gloomy around us — we won't know where to turn."

"Tommy had one dream. It was the dream of his heavenly mother. His dream came true. Yours can, too, if you remember Tommy."

"Remember Tommy. Turn to your heavenly mother. Even if the rest of the world laughs at you and tells you that you are just dreaming, keep in mind that true Devotion to Our Blessed Mother is a dream that will come true."

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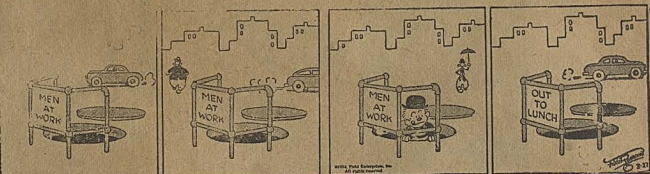
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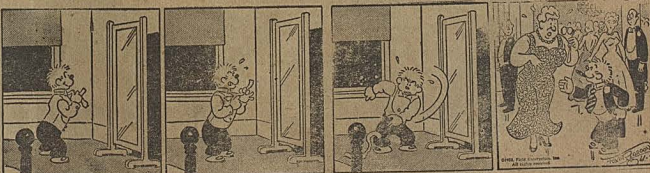
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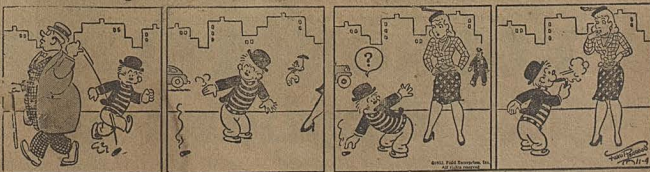
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